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ABSTRACT

This report is a summary of research that was recently conducted with instructors of distance learning programs. Sixty-two professors from 10 categories of courses completed an e-mail survey. The advantages and disadvantages of assessments seemed to revolve around the key issues of time, synthesis or knowledge acquisition, subjective or objective grading, and the real world. The four types of assessments most commonly mentioned were case studies, examinations, papers, and projects. The power of case studies was identified as their current, real-world application of concepts. They were used for improvement feedback, to evaluate, to facilitate learning, and to measure application and understanding. Examinations, the most traditional form of assessment, were cited for feedback and grading. Papers were most commonly used for the detailed analysis of one subject area, while projects were used by the instructor to help students set goals, evaluate the instructor, and provide grades. Quality was being maintained by these professors in generally informal ways, with comparisons and reviews of the assessments themselves being common approaches. In these distance learning situations, e-mail was the most common way students submitted work, although students used site facilitators or dropped off work when possible. Users were divided about the advantages and disadvantages of different delivery methods for lessons and assessment. Text delivery of content was a difficult area to define, but the typical course mailed a syllabus, learning resources, and text books to the student, who turned in assignments by e-mail, the Internet or fax. Cheating on assessments was the most emotionally charged issue in the study, with even defining cheating being difficult at the distance learning level. The first appendix discuses the study methodology and the e-mail survey, the second presents the interview guide, and the third is the survey itself. (SLD)

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How is Assessment Being Done in Distance Learning?

by

Matthew Dirks

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This report is a summary of research that was recently conducted with instructors of distance learning MBA programs. Instead of providing tables and tables of data emphasis will be placed on current practices in an attempt to help decision makers and instructors identify practices they want to emulate. With a clear understanding of current practices it is hoped that the next generation of distance learning programs can improve upon what is currently being done.

One of the greatest difficulties is sifting through the research and making decisions on what others might want to know. Questions are going to be presented to help organize the data in a meaningful way. Hopefully, these questions are relevant and the answers to them will help those involved in distance learning. The questions that will be addressed in this paper are:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of assessment and how are they being used?
- How much time is being spent doing assessment related activities?
- How important are exams?
- How is quality being maintained?
- How distance learning impact the communication between the learner and the instructor?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different delivery media and how does delivery impact student to student communication?
- Are distance learning instructors spending more time with on or off campus students?
- How is cheating being handled in the distance learning environment?

Appendix A will address the sample and the data collection techniques. If any of the questions seem relevant it is recommended that you review the Appendix to ensure everything is understood in context. Also consider that this information has been summarized a great deal and in that process inaccuracies may have been introduced.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different types of assessment and how are they being used?

The advantages and disadvantages of assessments seemed to revolve around five key issues: time, synthesis or knowledge acquisition, subjective or objective grading, and real world. You will notice that these issues bounce back and forth between the advantage and disadvantage column depending on the assessment used.

Instructors were asked why they used assessments in the phone interview (Appendix B) and what purpose their assessments serve in the written survey (Appendix C). The answers were closely tied to the advantages and disadvantages. The primary reasons given for having assessments included providing feedback, giving grades, and motivation. The four types of assessment that were most commonly mentioned are: case studies, exams, papers, and projects.

Case Studies

The results indicated that case studies power is in current, real world application of concepts. Here are the primary advantages and disadvantages mentioned by the participants:

Case Studies	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
	• Requires reading and comprehension • Demonstrate ability to apply • Opportunity for thorough feedback • Very current • Real world	• Subjective grading • Time (grading and doing) • No right answers

Case studies were used for improvement feedback, to evaluate, to facilitate learning, and to measure application and understanding. The impact this has had on learning included more reading, more work, and encouraged critical thinking through the synthesis of information.

Exams

Exams represent the most traditional form of assessment. There were several comments indicating that professors didn't know why they had them, they were only there to give grades, or it is part of the learning process. Even though their use can be based on tradition, they have a unique set of advantages and disadvantages:

Exams	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
	• Objective grading (no debates) • Motivational • Very efficient • Cover many topics • Quick turn around	• Difficult to grade (subjective) • Not enough writing • Selective sampling • Not tie to the real world • Not comprehensive • Can't ask follow up questions

The purpose of exams was two fold: feedback and grading. Exams impact on learning included motivation and improved learning. Exams encompasses final exams, quizzes, essay test, and multiple choice tests because of this we see tests as both objective and subjective. Exams seem to be used a lot simply out of tradition, but they are very useful because they motivate students, can provide quick feedback, and tend to be more objective to grade. Exams were used extensively and the question on "How important are exams?" addressed how much weight was put on exams in determining the final grade.

Papers

Papers are commonly used for an detailed analysis of one subject area. The advantages and disadvantages are:

Papers	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
	• Tailored to student needs • Real world (can't fake it) • Requires synthesis • Have to learn to write • A lot of personal feedback	• Subjective (low retest reliability) • Time to grade • Can's see actual performance

		• Cover's only one subject in depth

Like exams, papers were used to provide feedback and give grades. The impact of papers was reported as improved integration skills, writing skills and application.

Project

Projects include marketing projects, spread sheet projects, and project reports. The advantages and disadvantages of projects mentioned by the participants were:

Projects	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
	• A lot of flexibility • Solve real problems • Requires critical thinking • Longer assessments gives better insight into learning • Synthesis information	• Time (feedback, comments) • Non-self motivated students flounder • Subjective • Students worry about a bad grade

Projects were used to help the students set goals, evaluate the instructor, and provide grades. Projects were used to impact students writing ability and creativity.

The professors interviewed indicated that they made their assessment choices based on their goals, the tools capabilities, and the circumstances of the class. Instructors working in distance learning are not creating new forms of assessment and they most frequently choose assessment models that they have used before or have seen used.

How much time is being spent doing assessment related activities?

In the written e-mail survey (Appendix C) instructors were asked:

- Considering all the time you spend on this course (100%), how much of that time do you think you spend on student assessment (writing tests, grading, giving feedback, and reporting scores)?

The responses indicated that the newer teachers (2-9 years teaching) spent over half their time on assessment (56%), those with 10-19 years experience spent less time on assessment (46%), and the career instructors (20+ years teaching) spent the least amount of time doing assessment (35%). The data is very different when you look at experience teaching the given course. Teachers who had only been teaching the course for a year or less spent the least amount of time on assessment (40%), teachers who had taught the course for 2 to 4 years spent half their time on assessment (51%), and instructors who had been teaching the course for over 5 years spent 49% of their time doing assessment. This seems logical with first year teachers having to develop course materials and more experienced instructors managing the assessments and feedback more effectively.

The table below represents what percentage of time instructors teaching small, medium and large classes were spending on assessment. The table shows that the small classes spent considerably more time on assessment then the larger classes. The data may have been influenced by the number of correspondence instructors that participated in the research, but a chi square indicated that the variables are associated ($p>.01$). The last column indicates the average amount of time spent on assessment for that class size. In other words small class instructors on averaged spent 64% of their time doing assessment related activities versus large class instructors which on average spent 37% of their time.

Class Size vs. Percent Time Spent on Assessment

Class Size	Small % time on Assessment (1% - 33%)	Medium % time on Assessment (34% - 66%)	Large % time on Assessment (67% - 99%)	Average % time on Assessment
Small Class (1-15 students)	6	1	13	**64.1%**
Medium Class (16-44 students)	13	4	4	**39.6%**
Large Class (45+ students)	12	6	2	**36.8%**

How important are exams?

Exam usage varied by subject matter and by class size. Self reporting and participants course syllabi were used to determine how much of the grade was determined by exams. Subjects like finance and economics consistently relied on exams to determine more than 50 percent of the grades. On the other hand, subjects like ethics, human resources management, and quality management very rarely use exams to determine more than 50 percent of the grade.

The table below indicates how significant exams were compared to class size. As expected, exams were a larger portion of the grade as the class size increased. The small classes and large classes have reversed frequencies in terms of small percentage of grade in exams versus large percentage of grade in exams. The fourth column was used to indicate what percentage of the respondents in each category used exams to determine more than half of the grade. In the small class group on 19% of the participants used exams to determine more than half the grade and in the large group 64% used exams to determine more than half the grade. This indicates that exams are much more heavily relied upon in larger classes.

Class Size vs. Percent Grade Determined by Exams

Class Size	Small % of Grade in Exams (1%-33%)	Medium % of Grade in Exams (34%-66%)	Large % of Grade in Exams (67%-99%)	% that have ½ or more determined by Exams
Small Class (1-15 students)	7	1	4	19%
Medium Class (16-44 students)	2	9	5	50%
Large Class (45+ students)	4	9	7	64%

How is quality being maintained?

Quality has increased importance in distance learning because there is increased anxiety concerning whether the same level of education is being delivered. There are four many areas of focus for quality control in the distance learning MBA programs that

were surveyed: informal systems, measures on assessments, application, and university support.

Informal Systems

The first type of informal quality check is in comparisons. Comparisons are being made between students by checking the spread in grades, comparing one semesters grades to the next semester, and comparing on versus off campus students. Instructors indicate that these systems give them a feel for how well the assessments are differentiating students. These are informal systems because there aren't any measures taken, they aren't done systematically, and they are used sporadically when the instructor is interested or has time.

The major type of informal system is to rely on experience. Many professors indicated that they had been teaching for years and they know what a good assessment is and how well it will work with their students. This was also tied to face validity. The more experienced instructors seemed less concerned with quality because they knew what to ask and how to assess students abilities.

Another type of informal system was to relate student performance to an outside measure. CPA scores were sometimes collected by the instructor to find out if the students were getting the information they needed. This is considered an informal system because the professor may only contact a few students and received the information through verbal reporting. One instructor indicated that job placement rates and employment rates after completing the degree were meaningless because most of her students were employed when they came into the program and their companies were paying for the education. She thought the employment rate pre and post the MBA were probably equivalent, but over the years their salaries would increase.

Measures on Assessments

The most common form of quality checks occurred with the assessments themselves. Instructors indicated that they used question banks, checked internal reliability, through out questions everyone missed or got, and used old exam questions.

A few professors indicated that the internal reliability was automatically provided with their tests results and they were using them for quality checks.

Another form of quality checks concerning the assessment revolved around the process and procedures used to grade the assessments. Instructors indicated that they used universal grading sheets that clearly indicated what should and should not be marked correct. Other instructors indicated they only grade one question at a time so each student was held up to the same criteria. Only a few instructors indicated they went back through their assessments to determine if the questions actually matched the objectives that they had established for the course.

Application

The practical side of quality is application. Many instructors indicated that the assessments they choose were working because they knew by the end of the course that the student could do it. Instructors commonly mentioned the change in ability level of the students as their evidence that the assessments were working. One instructor put it this way, "I am preparing people to work in the real world, if they can do that when I am done, then I have been successful."

University Support

Some of the emerging distance learning programs are making giant strides in the area of quality control. The issue was clarified when one of the correspondence instructors indicated how difficult it was to be fair and consistent across students. "Every week there are new students beginning the course, and it is difficult to make sure that you always grade them the same way." The universities are aware of this and they have put in systems to help the instructors maintain quality and consistency. There are currently mentoring programs with senior faculty and some universities support faculty audits. A new program at the University of Phoenix randomly selects students in the distance learning program for a review. All of the students papers and the instructors comments are reviewed to give the instructor guidance on grading and providing feedback. Another leap forward has been in the area of curriculum quality teams. These teams meet every

six months to determine if the course, or its assessments, need to be revised. This helps to ensure that the course is on track and current. These systems have been added to the other more common types of quality control measures used by universities such as training and professional work shops

Quality control measures are becoming more and more important. Quality seems to be one of the areas that some of the emerging programs are investing in that could produce great results. Many universities policies seem to get in the way of quality assessments. Several of the respondents indicated that they used exams because they only had 72 hours to turn in grades. It seems that universities may need to provide a different level of support based on whether assessments are used to ascertain the students abilities or if they are used to determine grades, differentiate students, or motivate students to work.

How does distance learning impact the communication between the learner and the instructor?

Instructors were asked how students submit their work, contact the professor, and how they respond to questions. It became apparent that the students and the professors took advantage of the most convenient communication tool available to meet their needs. Most of the communication between the instructor and the learner does not take place face to face and is done via some form communication technology.

The most common way students submit work is via e-mail. E-mail was mentioned as the most common way of submitting work regardless of the delivery medium. When possible, students also use site facilitators or drop off assignments in person. Students also use fax, the Internet, and regular mail. One instructor had disallowed the use of e-mail due to the amount of computer viruses he was receiving from his students.

When students have questions the most common ways they contact the professor is by e-mail or phone. Many professors indicated that student questions on e-mail are much more informal and usually not as well thought out. Professors seemed to appreciate e-mail questions because it gave them time to consider their responses. Phone calls were

not as well appreciated because it was usually difficult to catch the other party and phone tag can get old quickly. The advantage of a phoned in question is that the student can clarify their question and pursue issues in a one on one environment. Several professors indicated that they "had no life" because they tried to be available for student phone calls and that using the phone to teach is not efficient because they end up re-teaching the same content several times.

Professors most commonly respond to questions in the same medium that the question was received. Professors indicated that it was very rare to respond to an e-mail with a phone call, but they had answered some questions during their presentation or lecture so that the entire class could benefit from the response. The same medium was also used when returning students work. If materials are handed into a site coordinator, the site coordinator commonly returns them. The final assessment was an exception because, if they are going to be returned, they are commonly mailed back to the student. Professors also indicated that in some instances where papers, and other assignments, were turned in via e-mail they had printed them out and made comments in long hand before returning them by regular mail.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different delivery media and how does the delivery impact student to student interaction?

Delivery media can be compared on several different levels. Ease of operation, cost, and availability are some important variables and are covered in other studies. This study looked into how the different technologies were being used and how they impact instruction. The six different delivery media included in the study are: 2-way video, audio, broadcast video, Internet, text, and video tape. The respondents were divided based on the primary way that the content was delivered to the learner. The primary issues that were repeated were: lack of face to face communication, the problems with technology, and the fact that asynchronous instruction commonly means that the instructor is always on duty.

2 way Video

2 way video offers some advantages in communication. It is one of the few distance learning technologies that allows dynamic real time interaction. Instructors using 2 way video had the largest average class size (48.3 students per class) and the largest class in the survey (180 students) was taught using this technology.

Instructors indicated that they liked the flexibility and the quick communication. They also indicated that they used more technology when teach this way (Elmo and overheads) and its biggest advantage was its ability to reach isolated students.

The primary disadvantages included technology problems and discomfort with the distance. Technology problems included echoes in the audio, only seeing one site at a time, and not being able to see all the students at a site. The students also showed a discomfort with the technology by being apprehensive and uncomfortable around the microphones or cameras.

Student to student communication occurred frequently with this kind of delivery. The students at the different sites naturally had discussions and met for study groups. Instructors encouraged this by requiring group projects, group presentations, and site teams. It was more difficult to get students to communicate between sites. One instructor recognized this problem and required each team to have at least one member be present at the originating site. This ensured that each team had access to the instructor and that the students at the originating site didn't have any advantages over the distance learning students.

Audio

Audio delivery is being used extensively by Regent's University and they were the only university in this study using audio as the primary way to deliver content. One professor indicated that this was the best way to reach their students because most of their students had to commute and they could replay the tapes as they were sitting in the car on the way to work. The average class size for audio deliver was 31 students.

The advantage of this delivery system is that it is totally asynchronous. This means that the student can listen to the content when ever they have time. They used e-

mail as the primary form of interaction and gave students very quick feedback to their questions and on their assignments. The disadvantage of this system was the reduced quality of communication. The instructors rarely got to know the students, not even their voices. There was less immediacy and the communication was less personal.

Students were encouraged to participate in discussion groups on the web and there was group project assignments. These activities allowed the students to get together and share ideas, but the instructor wasn't present.

Broadcast Video

Broadcast video utilizes current television technology. This was usually augmented by phone in lines, e-mail and text. The breadth of this delivery medium was illustrated by one professors comment, "I figure only about one third of the calls I receive during my class are from students, the rest are from the general public simply interested in the subject matter or looking for help with their own management problems." Broadcast video had the second largest average class size, 47 students. It was used to teach classes of 9 to 143 students.

Like 2 way video, the biggest advantage of broadcast video is the large number of students that can be reached. The disadvantages concern the lose of immediate communication. Phone in systems work well, but by the time the student was able to call the professor may have already moved onto another topic. With the way the broadcast video is currently set up instructors indicated that they felt as though they had to lecture and use that kind of instructional model. The immediacy of communication was also noticed with the lack of direct two way communication when using e-mail and Internet messages. Phone calls can help to bridge that gap but many times leaving messages can make the gap appear even larger.

Using broadcast video reduced the amount of student to student interaction. In most cases no sites were used so there were no opportunities for informal communications. A few professors indicated that they had team projects in their course, but most instructors indicated that they didn't know if the students ever interacted and

they had not designed any interaction into the course. One instructor was experimenting with a list serve, but found that it did not produce much interaction.

Internet

Internet delivery was one of the smallest groups. It was difficult to tell in many cases whether the primary delivery system was Internet or text. Twelve courses feel into this category and the class size ranged from 5 students to 29.

The biggest advantage of Internet delivery was the availability. The course content is available over the Internet 24 hours a day. Instructors can be reach by e-mail at any time. Several instructors indicated that they were always available for the students. This lead to one of the biggest disadvantages for the instructors, "I have no life." Many instructors indicated that they felt tied to their computers and that they received phone calls, e-mails and faxes all the time. They also indicated that they spent a considerable amount of time teaching over the phone and they felt like they were teaching the same content time and time again.

Student to student communication is being addressed through forums, small group work (on-line), and list serves. It was surprising how much of this communication occurred via computers. Students could very easily go through a semester and never hear their teacher or their fellow students voices even thought they could be interacting with each other on a daily basis.

Text Delivery

Text delivery of content was one of the most difficult areas to define. The typical course in this category follows a traditional correspondence course model. These course commonly mail the syllabus, learning resources, and text books to the student and the student turns in assignments over the Internet, by fax, or by e-mail. Class sizes were very difficult to define. Most correspondence course are considered to have a class size of one because students can begin when they want and there is no class setting. On the other hand there were classes in the survey that used text delivery and had between 100 and 150 students using text as the primary method of delivering the content.

The advantages of text delivery are tied to individual learning. Text based delivery allows students to set their own pace, receive individualized 1 on 1 feedback, and improve their writing skills. The disadvantages is that there is no personal contact. Students don't contact other students, rarely speak with the instructor, and commonly don't develop relationships while working on the course materials. Instructors also mentioned that it was frustrating sharing answers with only one student knowing that they would probably have to have the same conversation with another student within a week.

Instructors rely heavily on communication technology with this type of delivery. With text based learning fax and e-mail are the primary ways that students submit work to teachers. Mail is commonly too slow because by the time the student receives the feedback they have already completed another assignment and failed to incorporate the feedback. Feedback is commonly the most important way instructors communicate with students in this setting and they invest a lot of time and effort making extensive comments. This is probably why text based delivery showed the highest amount of time spent on assessment related activities.

Video Tape

Video Tape is very similar to broadcast delivery because commonly students are isolated from one another. The average class size for video tape delivery was 34 students. Class sizes ranged from 16 students to 40.

The advantage of video tapes was that almost everyone had access to the technology and you could reach a broad audience. The disadvantages concerned the quality of communication. Instructors liked the convenience of e-mail, but recognized that phone conversations provide verbal cues which can help their instruction. The feedback indicate that communication was cumbersome with this delivery method. Phone calls were repetitive and time intensive, and the group chats didn't seem to work.

Student to student communications were limited. Were tapes were delivered to sites some small group communication took place, but in most situations there was little student interaction. E-mail was used in a few instances to bring students together on work teams or for discussions.

Are distance learning instructors spending more time with on or off campus students?

At the onset of the phone interviews it became apparent that most of the instructors were dealing with on and off campus students. Some of these instructors would have both traditional and distance learning students in the same course where others would have one section of on campus students and another section delivered via distance learning. The participants were asked which group they spent more time with and the results indicate a solid "it depends". There was an even split between more time with on campus students, more time with off campus students, and spent about the same amount of time with both.

One instructor indicated that the wrong dividing line was being used, the real issue is the quality of the students. Several of the instructors who indicated they spent more time with the on-campus students indicated that the off campus students were much better and required less assistance: "The distance learning students are a ½ grade to a full grade better than the on-campus students". Instructors also indicated that the interaction was based on the students initiative and only those who had questions contacted them.

Administration also seemed to be an issue when considering where time was spent. Much of the time with distance learning students was spent answering e-mails. Many of these e-mails concerned administrative issues. The amount of time spent with distance learning students may very widely based on the amount and type of support the instructor has in delivering the course content.

How is cheating being addressed in the distance learning environment?

Cheating was the most emotionally charged issue covered in this research. There were several issues that came out when instructors were asked what they do when a student is caught cheating. Many instructors felt it was an issue at the master's level, some responded to how difficult it was to prove that a student was cheating, and others shared their policies on cheating.

Several instructors use assessment which require creative thought to complete the assignment. Many times students are encouraged to use any resources, or people, to complete the assignment. In this case it is difficult to define what cheating is. An area of concern that did arise was student buying papers. Different cultures view cheating differently. One instructor indicated that foreign students have purchased papers and submitted them thinking that it was acceptable because they had paid for them. The definition of cheating was also questioned when students would submit papers they had submitted to previous classes.

Many instructors shared their frustration with cheating in general. It is very hard to define what cheating is and the burden of proof rests on the professor. Several professors indicated that it just wasn't worth while to pursue the official review process. Instructors indicated that if the student wouldn't confess they wouldn't pursue the issue.

Because of the frustration, some instructors have developed their own policies on cheating. These policies ranged from receiving a zero on the assignment to being thrown out of the class. It was disappointing to see that only 15% of the syllabi collect had academic dishonesty policies in them. On one extreme, Regent's University has a standard phrase for how academic dishonesty will be addressed: "Transgressions shall be handled according to John 7:51." Most instructors indicated that the first step was to speak with the student and then see if a solution could be identified.

There are several processes that are being used to help reduce the possibility of cheating. One that was mentioned earlier was keeping the course current. When assignments are current there is no previous student work done in that area and the students don't have the option to cheat. Many instructors using 2 way video rely heavily on site coordinators to help them monitor student during assessment. It is becoming more common for those taking text based course to be required to set up a proctor at the beginning of the course which will be used to ensure honesty. Acceptable proctors include professors, librarians, and professional testing centers.

Conclusion

Distance learning is still a growing field full of experimentation and exploration. It was apparent through this research that instructors are not sharing their ideas, solutions, and failures with other professors in their own institutions or in other institutions. This has lead to many individuals having to recreate the wheel.

This research found assessment practices in general to be consistent with traditional education. Distance learning instructors haven't created new types of assessments and they are choosing assessments based on their needs instead of letting the technology dictate what they will use.

Distance learning instructors could benefit from more support from their institutions in the area of quality control. Many assessment practices are being adversely affected by university policy and instructors indicated that they were not getting the support they needed. Some of the emerging distance learning models are exciting because instructors are well supported and some good steps have been taken to ensure quality across instructors. Some of these steps should be adopted by more traditional institutions to help them prepare for the future.

Appendix A

How was this information collected and who participated?

Participants were selected based on course listings found in Peterson's Guide to distance learning. 25 university offering an MBA degree in the Fall of 1997 was solicited to participate, of those 21 universities had professors who completed the e-mail survey, phone interview, and provided a copy of their syllabus. The total number of participants was 62.

There were 10 categories of courses being taught: accounting, economics, ethics, finance, international business, (management), human resource management, quality management, regular management, and marketing. Management was one of the largest categories so it was broken down into sub categories. Class size varied widely among the

different categories. International business was only taught to large classes (45 or more students) and ethics was only taught to small or medium sized classes.

The surveys used to collect the data are included in the appendices. Appendix C is the original e-mail survey. This survey was sent after the professor had indicated that they were willing to participate. Appendix B is the interview guide used in the follow up phone interview.

Appendix B

Assessment Strategy Interview Guide

Professors Name: Date:
Survey Questions Time:

1. How did you determine the assessment components of your course (exams, quiz)?

   a) Did you use any university policies or guidelines?

   b) What criteria did you use when selecting different tools?

   c) How did you determine grade cutoffs?

2. How did you determine your assessment strategy? What factors played into your decision?

   a) Was the **class size** a factor?

   b) Was the way you **communicated** with students a factor?

   c) Did the **technology** have an impact on your assessment strategy?

   d) Was **security** an issue in determining your assessment strategy?

   e) Was the **time** necessary to grade or administer assessments and issue?

   f) Was the **evaluation** of the assessment an issue?

g) Did you get any advice from anyone with more experience?

3. Special grading situations
   a) How do you decide **borderline grades**? What factors influence your decision?

   b) How do you deal with a student who **hasn't completed** an assessment?

   c) What do you do if a student is **caught cheating**?

   d) Can students recover from a **bad first assessment**?

4. Have you done anything to check the quality of your assessments? (validity, reliability, generalizability)

5. How do your assessments impact the students learning?

6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the assessments you use?

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the way you communicate with the students?

Appendix C

Dear «Professor»:

Your willingness to participate in the distance learning assessment research is greatly appreciated. I recognize that you are very busy, so I am resending the survey because your input is critical to the success of this project. Your response will be significant in improving the study and my understanding of how assessment is handled at «University». The following survey is designed to collect information about the assessment methods you are using in «Course_Name». Information concerning how to reply (by e-mail, fax, or snail mail) is included at the end of the survey.

Thank you for your help,
Matt Dirks

I. Demographics (Pre-Interview research)

(This section was filled out automatically. Please check to ensure that all of the information is accurate and complete.)

1. The Course Number: «COURSE_NUMBER»
2. The Course Name: «COURSE_NAME»
3. The Instructor's Name: «PROFESSOR»
4. The Instructor's E-mail Address: «EMAIL_ADDRESS»
5. The Instructor's Office Phone Number: «PHONE»
6. The institution where the course is taught: «UNIVERSITY»

II. Course Information

(Please answer each of the following questions for the course listed above.)

1. How long have you been teaching college courses?

2. How long have you been teaching this course?

3. How many college courses have you taught via distance learning including this semester?

4. How many students are in the class this semester (include all sites)?

5. If you were using distance sites, how many sites were involved?

6. How much help did you have teaching this course? (who are they?)
(e.g.: graduate teaching assistant, site coordinators, web master, etc.)

7. At the beginning of the course did you communicate the course objectives (or goals) to the students? If so, how?

8. At the beginning of the course did you communicate the grading system to the students? If so, how?

9. How is the course content being delivered to learners? (video, Internet, text, etc.)

10. Considering all the time you spend on this course (100%), how much of that time do you think you spend on student assessment (writing tests, grading, giving feedback, and reporting scores)?

III. Assessment Information

1. In this course, what purpose do your assessments serve? (why do you have them?)

2. Please complete the table below indicating what you base grades on? (two examples provided)

   a) name or title of each assessment
   b) relative weight of each assessment (points or percentage of the final grade)
   c) description of the frequency and length of each assessment
      (number of tests and the number of questions on each test)
   d) description of the evaluation of the assessment (how it was scored)

Example #1

Assessment	**Weight**	**Frequency/length**	**Evaluation**

1. Tests	40%	2, 100 questions	Computer graded
2. Papers	45%	1, 20 pages	Instructor scored, w/ comments
3. Participation	15%	10, attendance	Instructor scored based on homework

Example #2

Assessment	**Weight**	**Frequency/length**	**Evaluation**
1. Quizzes	200 pts.	4 quizzes, 10 questions	TA scored
2. Test	200 pts.	2, 100 questions	Instructor scored
3. Homework	300 pts.	10, 5-10 questions	Instructor scored with comments
4. Attendance	100 pts.	10 attendance checks	TA checked in lab

Assessment	**Weight**	**Frequency/Length**	**Evaluation**
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

3. Are there other assessments (or assignments) that you used that are not included in the grade? If so, what are they?

1.

2.

3.

IV. Feedback and Student Interaction

1. How do students submit their work? (e-mail, fax, in person, to a site coordinator)

2. How do students find out how they did on your assessments?

3. When students have questions, what are the most common ways they contact you?

4. When you receive student questions, what are the most common ways you respond? (e-mail, phone, during lectures)

5. What are the most common things students ask about? (content issues, technical questions, clarify issues, grading issues)

6. How do students interact with other students (peer to peer interactions)?

V. Follow Up

(You have completed the time consuming part of this research. There are only three things left: the phone interview, the syllabus, and the course home page.)

1. When are good times to call you?

2. Is this phone number, «PHONE», the best one to use to contact you?

3. How can I get a copy of your syllabus? (on the web, e-mail, fax, mail)

4. If there is a course home page can I look at it? (What is the URL and are there any user names or passwords that I will need?)

Thank you for your participation. Your cooperation is invaluable to furthering research in distance learning.

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Matt Dirks is in the Instructional Systems program at Florida State University. This survey is part of his dissertation research efforts.